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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000477

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/INS
LONDON FOR POL/ERIEDEL
NSC FOR MILLARD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/12/2008

TAGS: [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: MAOISTS IN WESTERN NEPAL DISCUSS TERMS OF
CEASE-FIRE

Classified By: DCM Robert K. Boggs for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

Summary
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1. (SBU) On March 4, a non-governmental organization held a meeting with Maoist, government, and social organization representatives in Jumla, a district headquarters in Nepal's mid-western hills. The Maoists tentatively agreed to end extortion and allow for the free movement of political parties and the resumption of development programs, although these concessions must be approved by top Maoist leaders before being operative. The Maoists refused to put aside their arms or to quit holding mass meetings, while the army and police refused to return to their barracks. Notably, local government and Maoist representatives agreed to resolve potential flash-points through discussion, although the details of this mechanism have yet to be finalized. End Summary.

Talks on Talks: INSEC Brings 25 Parties to the Table in Jumla
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2. (SBU) On March 4, Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), a non-governmental organization (NGO) affiliated with the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML), held a meeting with a regional Maoist leader and 25 government and social organizations. The meeting was held in the Local Development Office in Jumla district headquarters. A spontaneous crowd of 200 people gathered at the site to watch the interaction. (Note: The police speculate that armed Maoist security personnel were hiding among the spectators.) Econoff arrived the following day and was able to talk with many of the participants, including the Local Representative of INSEC and organizer of the meeting; the Chief District Officer (CDO); the Deputy Superintendent of Police; and a local spokesperson for the UML. The Maoists were represented by the Chief of the District Intellectual Committee.

3. (SBU) The INSEC organizer reported that it had taken him ten days to forge an agreement to meet between the Maoists and the Chief District Office. Most of that time was spent in working through the hierarchy of Maoist contacts. An agenda was not approved in advance, and the INSEC forum was open for all participants to air their grievances.

Local Code of Conduct: A Reflection of National Debate
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4. (SBU) During his opening remarks, the Maoists' representative objected to the presence of an armed police officer, but agreed to proceed. (Note: The meeting was held 100 feet from the officer's home and adjacent to the police headquarters.) The attendees then presented a list of demands to the Maoists, including:
-- Freedom of movement for mainstream political party members;
-- Non-interference with development projects; and
-- An end to Maoist extortion, carrying of arms, and mass meetings.

The Maoists in response requested that the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), not represented at the meeting, and the police return to their barracks and allow the Maoists free movement in all areas of the district.

5. (U) The UML representative demanded an apology from the Maoists for the November attack on Jumla and an explanation of what the Maoists had expected to gain. His request was met by silence. The representative of the lower castes took the opportunity to protest the Maoist practice of impressing low-caste people into work as porters. If people do not agree to work for the Maoists, they will be killed; if they do, they could be shot by security forces as Maoist sympathizers, he complained. The Maoist representative stated only that there was no longer a need for porter services during the cease-fire.

6. (SBU) According to the INSEC organizer, the Maoists conceded in principle to the free movement of political party members; to non-interference in development projects, if they are given sufficient notice; and to stop fund raising.

However, the Maoist refused to put aside weapons or stop organizing mass meetings. Most importantly, the police and the Maoists agreed to put in place a mechanism through which disputes in the field can be resolved through dialogue rather than violence. The details of the mechanism, including the forum, ground rules, and representatives, have yet to be established. The Maoist told the other participants that the concessions requested of them must be reviewed by the central Maoist leadership before agreement could be confirmed. He would schedule a mass meeting the next week, he said, to announce the decisions of the Maoist party.

UML Touting the Party Line Despite Threats
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17. (C) The UML representative told econoff that during the meeting the Maoists demonstrated flexibility, while the government did not. He accused the local government representatives and the King of undermining the cease-fire by not taking "positive steps." When asked what those steps were, he repeated the UML's standard demand for an all-party interim government to replace the "illegitimate" government of Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand. Both the UML and INSEC representatives related that the Maoists accused the UML of undermining the peace process. The Maoists reportedly expect to become more powerful politically than the UML through negotiations. The Maoists suspect that the only way for the UML to prevent this outcome is for the UML to undermine the cease-fire. The UML representative said he fears for his life and the lives of UML cadre; therefore UML cadres no longer venture outside Jumla and have developed plans to leave the district if the cease-fire breaks down.

More to Come
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18. (SBU) The INSEC organizer was very happy with the outcome of the March 4 session and is working with the regional INSEC office in Nepalgunj in the southwestern lowlands to organize a mass interaction after the first round of anticipated peace talks in Kathmandu. The purpose will be to air the grievances of all parties affected by the conflict in order to make the peace agreement as broad based as possible.

Comment
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19. (C) Since the January 29 announcement of the cease-fire, local Maoist representatives have held meetings with politicians and members of civil society in a number of districts as a way to improve their public image, which had been badly damaged by a year of violent excesses. The March 4 meeting in Jumla, although organized by an NGO, is another example of the Maoists' efforts to project themselves as a responsible political party. It is unlikely that the discussions in Jumla have any implications for talks at the national level, as many of the concessions reached in Jumla had already been agreed to by the central Maoist leadership. Too little time has elapsed to evaluate whether the concessions on mass meetings and extorting funds will hold.

110. (C) Despite speculation by the vernacular press and Embassy contacts of emerging political factions within the Maoist movement, the near mirror-image demands of the Maoists at local and national levels and the need for the local representative to refer back to the center for approval demonstrate a highly centralized political organization. Whatever initiatives may be developed at the local level, little progress can be made without the imprimatur of the Maoist political hierarchy. In any case, this example of peaceful interaction between local Maoists and their recent victims bears testimony to Maoist seriousness so far about above-ground negotiations.

MALINOWSKI